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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006442

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2029

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR TU GR

SUBJECT: AEGEAN: TURKS ASSERT THAT THEY ARE DOING "NOTHING ABNORMAL"

REF: A. ANKARA 6209

¶B. ATHENS 4096

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador raised Greek complaints about territorial air space violations by Turkish aircraft with TGS DCHOD GEN Ilker Basbug and MFA U/S Ali Tuygan on November 18.

They both said that they understood the need for restraint, asserting that they were doing "nothing abnormal." They both were annoyed by the Greek complaints. Basbug implied that he believed the Greeks were attempting to use the EU process to ratchet down Turkish ability to fly in the Aegean.

Tuygan surmised that the Greeks were returning to "an old pattern of behavior," rebuffing every Turkish overture. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador raised Aegean flights with GEN Basbug November 18 on the margins of a meeting with visiting DSCA Director Lt.Gen. Kohler. Basbug remained calm but was clearly bristling by the time the Ambassador finished with his presentation on the need for restraint in the Aegean. Basbug responded that he understood the point. Nothing had changed since the Ambassador and he had last discussed this issue (ref A). The Turks were doing "nothing abnormal" in their flight patterns in the Aegean, he said. Their levels were down and explicit orders had been given to avoid trouble. This issue was being manipulated by the Greeks for reasons he could not understand (although he went on to imply that the Greeks were attempting to ratchet down Turkish ability to fly in the Aegean via the EU process). The Greeks had sent a note to SHAPE on this that was not only filled with falsehoods but was insulting in its tone. It allegedly says that "all NATO nations with the notable exception of one - Turkey - had assisted Greece with Olympic Security." Basbug noted that "they said this knowing everything we did" to help with the Olympics.

¶3. (C) Later November 18, the Ambassador raised the same issue with Tuygan. Tuygan said that "the Greeks, unfortunately and regrettably, are returning to an old pattern of behavior on this issue." The Turks, he noted, had briefed us in detail on the various efforts they had been making on both the maritime and aviation issues via the Ziyal-Skopelitis channel and the Ilkin-Apakan efforts. Unfortunately the Greeks had said no to everything the Turks had offered but still seemed to want to make an issue.

¶4. (C) Tuygan said that the Greeks were attempting to use the run up to December 17 to "make mischief on this issue and perhaps others as well." The GOT, he said, recognized that they should not give any pretext to the Greeks in this regard and was intent on not doing so. As both MFA and TGS had told us previously the requisite orders had been issued. That being said, Tuygan observed that "if the Greeks are intent on making this an issue there is not much we can do about it. For instance, he noted, when the Turkish Charge was recently summoned to the MFA in Athens to receive a "'strong demarche'" on the subject, it was being carried on wire service reports before he arrived at the Ministry. How are we suppose to manage that?" he asked.

EDELMAN